

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, August 9, 2015

Good morning friends. I've prepared a couple of separate topics for you today: The lesson of the seraphims' wings, and the Covenant.

The Lesson of the Seraphims' Wings

Isaiah 6:1-8 “1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 ¶ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

There is much to discuss and learn from this amazing vision that the Lord showed Isaiah, but I would like to touch on just one element of it this morning: what do we learn from the six wings of the seraphims, and how does it apply to our lives – every day. For context, there appears to be two parallel passages that speak to these same creatures by slightly different names, and with slightly different descriptions: Ezekiel 1, and Revelation 4. Here they are described as seraphims – the word means fiery, or burning, and is elsewhere translated as “fiery” and “fiery serpent”. They are burning – a flaming fire: **Psalm 104:4** “**Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire**”. They burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory and against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath when he is a consuming fire to his enemies. The most common notion about these creatures is that they are angels; others say that they are the ministers of the gospel, or even that they are specific people. For the sake of this discussion, I'm going to speak of them as angels, as it is the best light that I have on this day – I'm certainly willing to hear wisdom to the contrary, but whatever the case, it doesn't change the significance and application of the wings that we're talking about today. So let's talk about those wings – they are the only part of their appearance that is described for us, for our admonition and learning.

Here these creatures are in the very presence of God – his glory, majesty and power filling up, and exploding out of the temple! God is the focal point – the activity of these angels is directed at and by him. We see that two of the three sets of these remarkable creatures' wings are employed as a covering – a double dose of meekness and humility.

With twain he covered his face – they are shamefaced, modest, humble and reverent in the presence of God and his overwhelming divine glory! Looking upon that purity, brightness is like staring directly into the sun! Calvin: *“Let us, therefore, learn that our inquiries concerning God ought never to go beyond what is proper and lawful, that our knowledge may soberly and modestly taste what is far above our capacity. In like manner we ought to look at God, but only so far as our capacity shall enable us.”* If angels display this reverence and fear before God, how much more so ought we to present ourselves before the throne!

With twain he covered his feet – or their bodies (as those in Ezekiel 1). They covered their own strength, as an acknowledgment of their comparative impurity and weakness before God. Calvin suggests that they did so in order to conceal themselves from our view. Calvin: *“Let men learn, therefore, that they are far distant from a perfect knowledge of God, since they cannot even reach to the angels.”* If the angels have such humility, how much more so ought we to acknowledge our sinfulness, and how unworthy we are to stand before God, covering those feet that carry us swiftly to sin and trouble. How wonderful that the Lord has provided us such a covering, just as he provided those beautiful wings! He has given us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by which our feet are become beautiful!

“With twain he did fly” - They use these wings to readily, swiftly, cheerfully, obediently fly to that which God has commanded. This is a great virtuous, fervent energy used to understand, and to execute the will of God. The elect angels are single hearted in their service, and will not turn aside from their mission. Likewise we ought to utilize the spiritual and temporal gifts that the Lord has granted us to readily, continually, single heartedly be employed about the business of preaching the Gospel, and ministering to the saints in the earth! I think it is notable and instructive that the posture of these seraphims reflects a 2:1 focus on a spirit filled with reverence, meekness, humility, shame-facedness, sobriety, gravity, modesty and submission vs faithful, obedient outward action. It doesn't mean that there is less emphasis on our duty to faithfully fly to the bidding of our Lord – to the contrary – it means that we must make doubly sure that our spirit is toward our God, and not toward our own presumptuous flesh, when we go about to fly to his bidding.

Isaiah's words, in reaction to this amazing vision, confirm for us the lesson of those wings:

With twain he covered his feet – Isaiah recognizes his depraved, sinful heart and lips: **“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips”**.

With twain he covered his face - Isaiah gives reverence and glory to God: **“Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts”!**

With twain he did fly - Because of the righteousness of Christ (the coal from the altar that purifies his lips and purges his sin), Isaiah is emboldened to fly to do the will of God: **“Then said I, Here am I; send me.”**

We must have all three of these beautiful attributes. Consider what it would look like to have any one of them, without the others:

Only covering the face: We are surrounded by people who “give glory to God”, with not one ounce of obedience (flying) and no true humility. These are hearers (and speakers) of the word, but not doers.

Only covering the feet: These are those who speak of understanding their sinful nature, and their need for Jesus Christ, while in reality they reject him, by stripping him of his sovereignty and his glorious attributes, instead giving the glory to themselves (I have free will, and I chose to accept Jesus as my personal savior). Alternatively, these are those who wallow in the slough of despond, sinking under the weight of their sins, not believing the blood of Christ to be sufficient.

Only flying to the work: We know these people all too well – think big mouth street preachers who fly to preach their apologetic, works righteous “gospel”, but do it to satisfy their own pride – for vain glory's sake. They lack a true reverence for the Lord, or any real shame for their sin. They have a form of godliness that denies the power thereof. These are those that go up to the fight without God – they believe it to be their own fight - and they will most assuredly fail.

Indeed, the elect of God are the only ones who truly possess each of these attributes, and who are capable of exercising these graces, by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. We must be continually stirred up to sow to that Spirit, because we are foolish, forgetful creatures, and we are prone to the pride of our flesh. I had these things on my mind during this week, as I saw these various attributes exhibited in my beloved

friends, in the midst of satanic assault. It is always comforting to see the work of the Spirit of God – the fruit of the Spirit - in my brothers and sisters.

The Covenant

2Samuel 23:5 “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.”

I submit to you that there are two fundamental elements of our faith: we believe that God is, and we believe that he has made an unchangeable Covenant, fulfilled with the blood of the lamb, wherein we are promised an eternal reward.

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

I submit to you, that the second of these elements (he is a rewarder) is completely wrapped up in the Covenant, and that having these things sealed upon our heart IS the faith that the Holy Spirit imparts to the sheep, by which we please God. We often consider the resulting actions, effects and promises of this covenant, but don't always consider that it is the primary action from which our hope flows – without it, we have nothing. So, let us take a brief look at this marvelous work of God, called the Covenant.

What is a covenant?

Hebrew: bryith (ber-eeth') – Alliance, pledge, league, agreement

Greek: diatheke (dee-ath-ay'-kay) – testament, will, compact, arrangement

Dictionary: a contract; a binding agreement between two or more persons to do, or not do, something specified

There are various covenants throughout the Bible - some between men; some between God and men. Most of these are conditional covenants, meaning that they are impacted by the behavior of men. Chief among these is the covenant of works that we call the “Mosaic Law”. In this covenant, the Lord promised blessings if the Jews would obey him, and curses if they would not. If we were to put our faith into a covenant of human works, then our faith would be like vapor – here in one moment, gone in the next. Mercifully, the Lord has given us a perfect covenant, upon which we can safely rest ...

The Covenant of Grace - This covenant is eternal, unchanging, and unconditional (as it applies to humans). This covenant, and the God who made it, are the basis of our faith. Ephesians 1 contains a good synopsis of this covenant, the parties to it, the role of each party, the conditions of it, and the promised rewards to the beneficiaries.

Ephesians 1:3-14 “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

Let us now examine some of the details of this covenant:

Who are the parties to it?

The three parts of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They freely entered into this agreement, and they each have distinct roles and duties that they have and will fulfill. We will later look at these particular roles.

What type of Covenant is it?

It is a testament. The nature of a testament is that the testator identifies benefits (inheritance) that will be bequeathed (given) to the beneficiary upon the death of the testator. A testament cannot be executed without the death of the testator. The Covenant of Grace could not be executed – we could not receive our inheritance – without the death of Jesus Christ, the testator:

Hebrews 9:15-17 “9 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.””

Who are the beneficiaries of it?

God’s elect – his children by adoption! Their names were written in the Lamb’s book of life – it is sealed up and unchangeable. Not one name can be added or removed! As beneficiaries, they contributed nothing – it was done before they did anything – good or evil.

Philippians 4:3 “And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”

Revelation 20:12 “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works ... 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

How was it sworn?

God swore it by an oath, by his own name, for there is no greater, and seeing that he cannot lie, and that his counsel is unchangeable, it was immediately fixed and certain.

Hebrews 6:16-20 “16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Having been sworn, there was one condition upon which the covenant would be fulfilled – The Lamb must be slain; Jesus Christ must be our sacrifice, taking our sin upon himself, and enduring the punishment that we owe. We’ll return to that in a moment.

When was it made?

The covenant was made before the foundation of the world – before there was a world, before there was Adam and Eve, before the fall of man into sin, before anyone had done good or evil, before there was a need for a savior. Having been sworn, every act was certain, and every promise assured.

Matthew 25:33,34 “33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:”

As we saw earlier, the covenant was to be fulfilled by the blood of Jesus Christ. Again, given the unchanging nature of God and his word, the blood of Jesus Christ was spilled, and that condition of the covenant was fulfilled, the very instant that he agreed to it. The perfect Lamb was slain – and his blood was effectual - from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (Antichrist), whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

The duration of this covenant is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalms 103:15-18 “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

Is the covenant of the Old Testament different than the covenant of the New Testament?

NO! There is only one everlasting covenant that brings salvation – there is no other way to God, than through this covenant, and the blood of the Lamb that fulfilled it. There are different administrations, or manifestations of the covenant in the Old Testament vs the New Testament – that is to say that there are different things revealed to, and required of God’s elect in this earth in each of those dispensations. The grace and mercy of God – alone – brings salvation, not the works of man. The blood of sacrifices (as a part of the covenant of works with the Jews) was no more effectual for salvation in Moses’ day than baptism and the Lord’s supper are in our day; although

any man who is called of God will seek to obediently do all of those things that God requires in their day. The blood of Christ saved Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, just like it saves us – they knew him as the Messiah, and we know him as the Christ, the anointed king. Same Lamb, same sacrifice, same covenant.

What is the role of the Father?

He chose out a people for his name's sake, and gave them to his son. Identifying and predestinating each of us individually, and by name.

Ephesians 1:3-5 “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”

He reconciled his chosen people to himself, and receives us as sons.

2Corinthians 5:18,19 “18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

In covenants those that are otherwise equal can take on unequal roles for the purpose of that covenant. Where the three parts of the Godhead are all equally God, they took on unequal roles in the covenant. The Father took the preeminent role – he took upon him the authority to command and enjoin the work and conditions of this covenant. It is the Father's will that drives the covenant.

John 10:17,18 “17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

John 12:49,50 “49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

John 14:28-31 “28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

What is the role of the Son?

The part that Christ plays in this covenant is so great, that he is said to be the covenant itself: **“I will give thee for a Covenant of the people” (Isaiah 42:6).**

Gill: “He is the first and the last in it, the sum and substance of it; he is everything, ALL in ALL in it; all the blessings of it are the sure mercies of him, who is David, and David’s Son; he is presented with all the blessings of goodness, and the covenant people are blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, as their covenant head; all the promises are made to him, and are all yea and amen in him;”

Jesus Christ declares his readiness and willingness to fulfill all that the Father commanded, and that he agreed to. He would take on this human flesh; remain sinless, so that he (also being God) would be an appropriate sacrifice; suffer the contradiction of sinners; take our sin upon himself, and suffer the penalty of the law that we deserve, at the hands of his own creation; become righteousness for his people.

Hebrews 10:4-18 “4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 ¶ Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. 8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This is the covenant

that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”

Christ took upon himself various characteristics and offices, he is our: Mediator, Advocate, High Priest, Redeemer, Kinsman, Captain, Shepard, Surety, Testator, etc.

He received his people from the hand of the Father, as his property, his purchased possession, and as his for safe keeping.

John 10:27-30 “27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. 30 I and my Father are one.”

What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

His primary role is to sanctify – to separate out - those chosen beneficiaries of the covenant. He seals, or indelibly marks us, as the property of Christ!

Ezekiel 9:4-6 “4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. 5 ¶ And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark ...”

2Timothy 2:19 “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

He enters into the heart of God’s people – it is an irresistible call. He calls them out of the corrupt mass of mankind; softens their hard, depraved heart, and writes the law of God upon it, thereby drawing them, as the Father commanded. He calls us to God, by the Gospel of Christ. After which he dwells with them, leads them into all truth, rightly dividing the scriptures to them as they have need. He is our comforter.

John 15:26 “26 ¶ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”

John 14:26,27 “26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

This is his work in the covenant, but he also has another function: He is the seal of the covenant; he binds the contract; he bears witness to our adoption. The fact that he performs his work in our hearts, filling us with faith, is the surety of the contract, it is the earnest of our inheritance. It doesn't make the contract more sure in itself – God has already promised it – but it makes it more sure to our hearts – it is a work of great kindness and mercy from our Father to give us that surety! Earnest means serious and sincere – his dwelling in our hearts shows us the sincerity of God. Earnest also means “a pledge” – a portion of something that is promised, to assure that the entire promise will certainly be fulfilled.

2Corinthians 1:21-22 “21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; 22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

2Corinthians 5:5 “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

Romans 8:14-16 “14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:”

We have the Spirit with us, as a portion of the promised reward, to reassure us that the entire reward will be given! What comfort! What lasting peace and joy!

What is the promised reward?

In short: Eternal Life! I could go on and on with the particulars of what we are promised (Christ has gone to prepare mansions for us; we are to be heirs and co-regents with him; we are to be unmovable pillars in the Temple of God; we will have glorified bodies that can dwell in heaven, in the presence of God for eternity, etc.), but

this is the core of our hope – eternal life! It is the inheritance that has been laid up in store for us!

1John 2:25 “25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”

Titus 3:5-7 “5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Titus 1:2-3 “2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;”

This brings us full circle: We believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This covenant is everything that we are, and everything that we hope. It is sure and unchangeable – praise God! We are surrounded by people who profess the name of God, but build their “hope” on a foundation of sand – when they proclaim free will, they reject this covenant that God made in eternity past, thinking that they have the wisdom and power to change what the Lord God has already sworn to. If God could be changed, if this covenant could be changed – THEN WE HAVE NO FOUNDATION AND NO HOPE! Let us rest upon our God, beloved.

I love you all. Amen.